

The Ballarat Naturalist

June 2014



The Wonder of Wildflowers of W.A. Presented by Elizabeth Thurgood

The lines on a map of Australia showing the adventures of Elizabeth and Denis looked like a web of which any self-respecting spider would be proud. They covered the centre as well as edges and were inspiration for any intending traveller although a considerable sense of adventure would be needed to achieve any degree of emulation. With much to choose from, a couple of areas from a 2010 trip were chosen for this presentation.



The story starts with a trip along Googs Track which goes north from Ceduna for 140km with over 300 sand dunes one of which provided a photo opportunity when the vehicle became stuck and needed a recovery device called MaxTrax to facilitate progress, these becoming buried in the sand in the ef-

fort. It was explained there were few flowers to photograph. However two very interesting photos of a dragon taken two minutes apart, showed how the creature could rapidly change colour.

In the wheat belt of Western Australia we saw photos taken along the road of beautiful Wreath Lechenaultia, *Lechenaultia macrantha*. Also featured were *Lechenaultia formosa* and the ever popular *Lechenaultia biloba*. It was pointed out that there are 26 species in the Lechenaultia family with 20 endemic to Western Australia. Rare *Acacia alata* with its winged stem and interesting red vein was shown as was Narrow-leaf Squill, *Chamaescilla spiralis*.

The Western Flora Caravan and Tourist Park at Eneabba was visited.

Alan Tinkler is still conducting afternoon talks on vegetation and pollination explaining the unique relationship between insects and plants and how some flowers change after pollination. Amongst others, a photo showed an extensive expanse of Smoke Bush, *Cosmospermum species* taken at Mt Leseur National Park. The flowers have a black spot to locate the entrance which is only 0.5mm.

Next was a stay at Hi Vallee farm, Badgingarra. Half of this 2000Ha farm, 200km north of Perth is uncleared and it is described as the most valuable bush in private ownership. A stay here was a highlight, not only because of the natural environment but also because the owners, Don and Joy Williams were generous with their time and shared their enthusiasm for the area. Obviously a great place to visit and stay. We were treated to many photos.

Other notable places on the tour were Wongan Hills north of Perth and Scott River Road near Margaret River. The former had lots of verticordias and on Scotts River Road there was the Zig Zag Wattle *Acacia macradsenia* with its interesting zig zag structure and the Matchstick Banksia, *Banksia cuneata*. There were of course many other pictures which were a credit to the photographer, with plants identified and location described.

For those inspired to follow their trail, books were shown including *How to Enjoy W.A. Wildflowers* by Dr. Jim Barrow, *Wildflowers of Southern Western Australia* by Margaret G. Corrick and Bruce A. Fuhrer and *Guide to the Wildflowers of Western Australia* from Simon Nevill Publication with over 1150 plant species illustrated.

As always, Elizabeth showed her enthusiasm not only for the beauty of plants but for recording and identifying them. It is easy to look, even in out-of-the-way places, but not so easy to put names to what is seen.

Thank you Elizabeth and Denis for providing an informative, interesting and inspiring journey through our land. Western Australian plants are just amazing and you reminded us about them and inspired us to get going and to enjoy them.

Peter Dalman

June Excursion notice

NB Excursion is on Saturday, 7 June

Fungi - lead by Les Hanrahan, club member

Usual departure place from Ballarat for members.

Venue: *Garden St. Erth carpark, 10.30am ,Blackwood*

Everyone had plenty time to prepare for the excursion this morning because daylight saving had ended. The easterly breeze was fresh until we were in the shelter of trees at the Clarkesdale bird paddock. An Australasian Grebe and a few Grey Teal were seen on the lagoon and a Wedge-tailed Eagle was soaring above the rail trail but few other birds were active. A most interesting botanical observation was a flowering Parson's Bands, *Eriochilus cucullatus* growing on the side of a cutting along the rail trail.

After a morning tea and comfort stop in Linton we went to Alice and Kevin Knight's home where we learnt of the work done by five land-care groups which make up the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group. Woody Yaloak Catchment begins on the western edge of Ballarat and extends southwards to Lake Martin near Cressy. Initial work on farms concentrated on tackling the problems of salinity and soil erosion. Local farmers, Kenneth and Dianne McBeath, spoke of their block of land near Flagstaff Hill that is managed to maintain the grassland and woodland area while the land is still grazed with sheep.

Lunch was enjoyed in the Knight's house and garden. In true Field Nats fashion we had all packed our lunch but Alice invited us to share the delicious lasagne and salad which she had prepared.

We then travelled south to Kenneth and Dianne's block near Flagstaff Hill. As we drove through the gate we entered a paddock of Kangaroo Grass and Wallaby Grass with scattered Messmate, Brown Stringybark, Blackwood and Black Wattle trees. The area is only lightly grazed with sheep from autumn until spring. This management regime has allowed the grassland species to flourish. An area which had been bulldozed 40 years ago is now covered with Stringybark. Some of our group walked while the rest travelled in cars through this beautiful grassy woodland. These grasslands would be worth a visit in spring.

On a wooded hillside a 10 acre area has been fenced to exclude all grazing. A good variety of large plants was found including Wattle Matt-rush, Pimelea, Cranberry Heath, Common Flat-pea, Guinea Flower, Honey-pots, Peach Heath, Sweet Bursaria, Common Hovea. Cherry Ballart and Drooping Sheoak. From another hill we had good views southwards to Mt Elephant with other volcanic cones near Camperdown in the background. In another exclusion plot we

found Bidgee Widgee, Sheep's Burr and Ivy-leaf Violet. After thanking our leaders for the day we returned to the Knight's at Linton. It was only then that we realised that two walking ladies had not been picked up. Husbands returned to find them waiting along the road to the right of the gate at which the cars had turned left and missed them. We all enjoyed Alice's fruit scones for afternoon tea before returning home.

John Gregurke

SEANA Camp at Marysville

hosted by Upper Goulburn FNC

For the weekend, 2-5 May, nine FNCB members were comfortably accommodated at the *Camp Marysville* used after the fires and a few km out of Marysville. In the following reports by club members mention is made of most of the excursions that were available.

Lake Mountain Excursion Sunday 4 May

John Gregurke As we drove up the road from Marysville the temperature dropped to 2° C. We could see light coloured patches on the hills. Were they wet, shiny rocks? We soon realised that it had been snowing overnight.

Arriving at the Lake Mountain summit carpark we were greeted by a male Flame Robin perched on the a rock covered with a light sprinkling of snow. Crimson Rosellas were seen on a grassy patch surrounded by snow. What a memorable beginning to an excursion.

We quickly put on coats and other wet-weather gear before setting off for a walk lead by Judith of Ringwood FNC. She has been surveying Lake Mountain on a monthly basis since the Black Saturday fires, 2009. She shared her extensive knowledge with the group.



Photo:: Cascade Everlasting covered in snow

In an area near the buildings a small arboretum is being established to display some of the common plants in the area. Long-leaf Wax-Flower with developing flower buds and Cascade Everlasting looking a picture covered in snow.

Subscriptions are now due

Should you wish to pay your membership at a bank or on line, our bank details are :

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat Inc., Bendigo Bank, **BSB 633 108**
Account no. 1191 12290 ***Please remember to add your name***

Ordinary member \$35 Family \$55

Distant member \$15 Student \$15

Newsletter postage (Ordinary member) \$8*



Photo:Long-leaf Wax-flower in snow

The plateau of Lake Mountain, at an elevation of 1350 metres, is covered in sub-alpine vegetation of Snow Gum woodland with wet, bog areas supporting heath land and mossbeds. We walked along cleared, well-grassed cross-country ski trails. Snow Gums are regenerating from seed and vegetatively from the roots. New growth is up to 5 metres tall.

Dense patches of Blackwood, Silver Wattle and Mountain Hickory Wattle have regenerated from seed. Alpine Mint Bush was seen with a few flowers. On our return journey to the car park it began to snow and as we reached lower levels it turned to rain which soon melted the overnight snow. We enjoyed lunch in the foyer of the ski shop.

In the afternoon we walked the newly built board walk at Snowy Hill with interpretive signs explaining some history and recovery of vegetation after fire. As we descended the entrance road we noted the change in vegetation from Snow Gum to Alpine Ash with Mountain Ash at lower levels. Myrtle Beech grew in sheltered valley where it was protected from fire.



Photos Dead Alpine Ash regrown after 1939 fire, killed by 2009 fire, with seedling regrowth after 2009 fire.

Val Hocking

A camp highlight for some of us was the visit to Lake Mountain summit on Sunday when we found a fresh fall of snow providing a beautiful cover to some of the vegetation. We walked around part of the Summit Loop track viewing the snow gums that are slowly recovering from the 2009 fires and past a couple of pond areas with damaged Sphagnum Moss.



Photo: Ghost Fungi



Photo: Small animal foot prints in the snow

On the return journey we were treated to light snow falls. (We were well rugged up.) Flame Robins and Crimson Rosellas were seen at times. This area used to be the habitat of the endangered Leadbeaters Possum, the subject of our Sunday night talk. Most died in the fires and a remaining pair are now at Healesville sanctuary.

Later that afternoon we visited Steavenson falls. I had visited here one year after the 2009 fires seeing the utter devastation. It was pleasing to see it from a very different perspective with large regrowth of the forest. The falls are flood lit every night, powered by the hydro generator on the lower path, which also feeds electricity into the grid. Do come and visit this beautiful area and help in Marysville's recovery.

Photo: .Steavson Falls



Clare Dalman: An overview of SEANA at Marysville

Peter and I spent nearly a week in Marysville last year, partly for us to see how the town was recovering from the 2009 Black Saturday fires, and partly to do our small bit in helping local business. It was amazing to see how much change has occurred in a year but much rebuilding is still needed and much of the bush is still confronting. What was an absolute pleasure was the brilliant display of autumn foliage against dark skies and mingled with blackened trunks. Locals said the colours are particularly good, and while we had limited sunshine to intensify the brilliance, it was beautiful.

Friday night began the program with a reflective talk by Mary Kenealy and watching a video of film taken during the fire by a local man who was lucky to live to show it. Mary, in a quietly matter-of-fact manner spoke about the fire, town losses and challenges and issues still worrying the townspeople now and into the future. As a local historian and author who suffered personal losses but has worked hard to restore, find, rebuild and rewrite, she certainly began the weekend program by ensuring we had a glimmer of knowledge about dreadful events. A book was available "*natures odyssey*" by Murrindindi writers. Impossible to read and not be touched. This book includes prose, poems and artwork by many people but for us, of special interest, are the works by Graham and Beth Page and Eileen Slack, all active field naturalists and organisers of the camp. Excellent work - stark, provocative, reflective and disturbing.

Saturday morning saw Peter and I go to Cathedral Range State Park where there are camping areas and many walks. We walked to the Cooks Mill area located on Little River. The area was burnt so is in a stage where some plants dominate, particularly blanket leaf and vegetation is crowded and thick. We saw an impressive group of Ghost Fungi around several trees and quite a few other fungi. I heard a Lyrebird imitating several bird calls and other sounds in quick succession. A camper had seen it.

Lunch at camp was followed by a drive to Buxton to see the rare Buxton Silver Gum *Eucalyptus crenulata* in a reserve.



Photo: *E. crenulata*

They were burnt but have regenerated from underground lignotubers or from seeds. We walked to the Acheron River, ably led by Jeff Olive who then led us to his property. His extensive, beautiful garden has emerged from the fire amazingly, considering his home only just survived. Some of his native trees and shrubs were stunning.



A bower, much decorated with blue trinkets was interesting. We glimpsed the Bower Bird but not at his bower.

Photo: Bower (Need colour to see blue objects)

We were shown a prototype nest box contrived from purpose hollowed logs, able to accommodate whatever size bird or mammal is needed by varying the entrance hole diameter. Obviously the fire destroyed countless natural hollows.

The excursion was ended at a Buxton carpark to allow us to observe the Meeting of the Waters. Here, easily accessible and clearly visible are the Little Steavenson, the Steavenson and the Acheron Rivers, all becoming the Acheron on their way to the Goulburn and eventually the Murray River. A lovely spot – thanks Eileen.

Saturday afternoon included the SEANA A.G.M. and an evening presentation about fire recovery progress from Steve Smith from the Department of Environment and Primary Industries.

Sunday we spent heading to Eildon. After the entire convoy was breathalysed at Taggerty (a first for us on a Field Nats trip) we stopped for the morning in a beautiful private property. This working cattle farm, complete with wetlands, has numerous old trees. Many are Redgums, some of which have been cut to make M.C.G. furniture, but most of which provide marvellous bird habitat. One in particular, is huge and hollow on one side but still looking healthy despite evident fires from earlier times. A Restless Flycatcher was good to watch and some obliging red robins sat still close together, to allow us to see the differences between Scarlet and Flame Robins. We were shown a hillside scattered with square or oblong rocks. With some edges quite straight and sharp. Our guide, Neil Hyatt, suggested they were uplifted shale. One thing which was new to me was an old honeycomb draped over a tree branch, created by some

Photo: Large Redgum



escaped hive bees. Neil then led some of us up a 4WD track to a magnificent view near power pylons overlooking the Eildon pondage and vast distances.

Lunch at Eildon alongside the dam pondage was followed by a drive up Mt Pinniger, 855 metres high and overlooking the dam wall and Eildon Weir. We were shown six high-voltage power-lines which stretch from Mt Pinniger to Mt Enterprise. They are the longest such wires in the southern hemisphere. Bob Tate's local knowledge was helpful as he led this trip. Next was a walk around some pondage. Few birds were seen but I was delighted at the end to see my first Gang Gang Cockatoos in the wild. We had a really good, close look at three, a male, female and young which was being fed by Dad. They are beautiful and made my day complete.

The night presentation by Dan Harley about Leadbeaters Possum *Gymrobeldens leadbeateri* was excellent but worrying. Monday morning saw the remaining naturalists travel to Alexandra to meet Joan Semmens who spoke to us about McKenzie and Mt Pleasant reserves before leading us on a walk through the former. She has written and illustrated a seasonal book about this reservation. On a ridge above numerous kangaroos, tall trees could be seen. Joan commented that White Box enjoy the view – a helpful diagnostic hint.

A chilly lunch in Alexandra saw us head our separate ways to meet again in September in Portland. Well done Upper Goulburn.

Urgent - June Meeting Talk

Dr. Graeme Ambrose who is to speak to us on Friday June 6 about non-flowering plants, such as mosses, liverworts and lichens is happy to provide members with digital copies of guides to bryophytes and lichens if members bring their USB stick to the meeting. One is a guide to mosses and liverwort species found in Mt. Helen area (the common ones for the region) and the other is a guide to the Macrolichen genera of western Victoria.

Excerpts from Club Meeting Minutes, 4 April, 2014

The President welcomed 30 members and friends. Apologies: Carol Hall, Elspeth Swan, Genny Binns and Douglas Menin.

Business: Wayne McGuire accepted position on committee

Correspondence in : The Tasmanian FNC: email notifying us of recently published book - "*A Field Guide to Tasmanian Fungi*".

ANN: John Gregurke notified all Clubs registered with ANN that contact details have been updated in the last two weeks. (Our new secretary's details are now on their website).

Victoria McDonnell, a student at Federation Univ.:email appeal for help to locate sites where she might find a few fossils to study.

Wombat Forestcare: email requesting our Club to be one of 32 signatories to a letter to Dr Paul Smith, the Deputy Secretary of Land & Fire Management, DEPI. The letter relates to concerns around Planned Burns, biodiversity and threatened species.

OUT:To Wombat Forestcare: FNCB to be included as a signatory .

Business Arising from Correspondence:

Denis Thurgood is happy to continue representing FNCB. Re the possibility of FNCB hosting a SEANA camp: majority of the group were most supportive of hosting the Autumn Camp in 2015.

Reports Treasurer; Opening balance \$5,783.69 Inc. \$221, Exp. \$254.20 Clos. bal: \$5750.49

FOCC John Gregurke reported on the forum about the proposal to establish a multi-use regional reserve in the Canadian Corridor.

General Business

April excursion: Woody Yaloak Catchment Group, with Alice Knight. Sunday April 6, 9.30am. Alice was not available until 11am so the group will first go to the Bird Paddock in Linton.

A motion to approve Emily Noble, the Club's new Secretary, as a signatory for banking This makes the three current signatories Les Hanrahan, Peter Dalman & Emily Noble.

Show and Tell Reports

John Gregurke told us of his first sighting since the drought several years ago, on April 4, of Superb Fairy-wrens two adults and an immature Fairy-wren in a Wendouree Garden . Elaine also saw Superb Fairy-wrens in their garden.

John Mildren and John Morrish saw 7 or 8 small (young?) water rats with two adults in the ponds of Fairyland at Lake Wendouree. Peter Muller now has a family of bush rats living in his shed at Enfield and enjoying his hospitality, particularly the tomatoes he so kindly grew for them in his vegie patch. Fran Hanrahan also saw a water rat run out of Lake into hole. She also saw a black wallaby, Mt Warrenheip.

Ken Hammond spotted a Wedge-tailed Eagle being harassed by Magpies above Doodts Rd, Nerrina, Mar 29. Paul Norquay saw 2 Copperhead snakes in vegie patch, Mt Egerton Les Hanrahan saw 2 Wedge-tailed Eagles flying over Bungaree and came across a koala on the summit of Mt Warrenheip. Mike Sorrell witnessed 4 Sulphur-crested Cockatoos soaring at 97m altitude over Lake Wendouree when they were attacked from below by a family of magpies.

Dulcie Brooke spied several Australasian Grebes and one Great Crested Grebe on the north-west area of Lake Wendouree.

Emily Noble saw flowering of Bearded Midge Orchids, Sharp Midge Orchids, Parsons Bands and Red-tip Tiny Greenhoods in Enfield State Forest, Scarsdale, where DEPI have a Planned Burn. She also found Bearded Midge Orchids at Jubilee Mine, Berringa, and watched an Echidna crossed the beach at Aireys Inlet, from the sand dune and up the cliffs,

Out at Lake Burrumbeet, Wayne McGuire observed about 50 Red-necked Stints, 5 to 20 Red-capped Plovers, 2 Blue-winged Parrots and 2 Wedge-tailed Eagles who were sitting on the north side fence.

In Ballarat East, Val Hocking's *Eucalyptus ficifolia* is regularly playing host to 6-8 Rainbow Lorikeets, rather than the Musk Lorikeet's of last year and also saw Grey Currawong eating grapes in the yard.

Claire Dalman wondered if the scarcity of Superb Fairy-wrens in her garden since the removal of a dense row of Pittosporum and Photinia plants along the nearby service road in Miner's Rest was a coincidence. She also saw 20 large Kangaroos in the Ascot area

Peter Billing displayed a Wallaby skull found in Wombat Forest a couple of years ago. In late March, he had observed cockatoos or corellas in "plague" proportions feeding on ? pine nuts at Lake Wendouree, and noted the presence of a Little Black Cormorant and Pied Cormorant on the Lake.

Denis Thurgood has had an Echidna visiting his garden in Beaufort in March and April, and he has seen flocks of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos in pine trees nearby.

CALENDAR 2014

June

- Fri 6 *Cryptogams: vital role of smallest photosynthesisers* -
Dr Graeme Ambrose Environmental scientist
- Sat 7 Exc: *Fungi* Venue TBA - Les Hanrahan, club member
- Tues 24 Committee meeting at Fran Hanrahan's

July

- Fri 4 *Wet and Windy Life on Sub-Antarctic Island* - Carol
Hall, Geographer & club member
- Sun 6 Exc: *Eucalypts north of Ballarat* - John Gregurke

Committee

President Peter Dalman
Vice –President..... Fran Hanrahan
Secretary Emily Noble
Treasurer..... Les Hanrahan

Claire Dalman
John Gregurke
Wayne McGuire

Val Hocking
John Mildren

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Meetings are held at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr and Gregory Sts, on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm..

Excursions: Leave from the carpark at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Sts. at 9.30 am, unless otherwise advised.

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